

Before and during World War II there was almost no Anti-Semitism in Finland, and in fact, the Finnish government refused to condone the Nazis' anti-Jewish platform. When Finland also refused to cooperate with the Soviet Union in late 1939, Soviet troops attacked Finland. As equal Finnish citizens, the country's Jews joined the army to fight the Soviets; some 15 were killed and many others were wounded. After holding out for several months, Finland surrendered to the Soviet Union in March 1940 and was forced to hand over some of its territory to the Soviets.

In 1941 German troops came to Finland; Finland then joined Germany as its ally in the attack on the Soviet Union in order to recapture the land it had lost to the Soviets in the Winter war. Some 300 Jews (Finnish citizens and refugees from other countries) served in the Finnish army during the Continuous war. The German authorities requested that the Finnish government hand over its Jewish community, but the Finns refused. Reportedly, when SS chief Heinrich Himmler brought up the "Jewish question" with Prime Minister Johann Wilhelm Rangell in mid-1942, Rangell replied that there was no Jewish question in Finland; he firmly stated that the country had but 2,000 respected Jewish citizens who fought in the army just like everyone else, and thus closed the issue to discussion. The Germans did not press the issue, as they were afraid to lose Finnish cooperation against the Soviets.

However, later that year, Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller discussed the deportation of Jewish refugees in Finland to Germany with the head of the Finnish State Police (Valpo), Arno Anthoni, during his visit in Berlin. Finally eight Jewish refugees were deported to Tallin and only one of the eight Jews survived. Many clergymen and politicians condemned the deportation, the case was also discussed in the press and as a result the Finnish government refused to surrender any more Jews to the Germans. Apart from that one incident and those Finnish Jews who died on the battlefield, the Jews of Finland, both local Jews and refugees, went through the war almost unharmed. It should be noted, however, that Finnish authorities apparently have some responsibility in the death of other Jews.